

**BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
EDUCATION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
December 11, 2003**

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A meeting of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Shepard Building - 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 and convened at 5:10 p.m.

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**In Attendance:**

J. Gaines, P. Guida, H. Gallo, M. Mancieri, F. Caprio, C. Callahan and S. Duff.

**Public Remarks**

Steven Fishback, from the Children's First Coalition, addressed the Board as a follow-up to his previous remarks on the Progressive Support and Intervention process. He told Board members that conversations with the Commissioner are ongoing and expressed his hope that the dialogue will continue. Mr. Fishback also congratulated the Board and Commissioner on agenda item # 4 – the proposal to change Regents regulations to lengthen the school day and increase teacher professional time. He told members that the proposal is very good news and an important step in improving low performing schools. He urged members of the Board to approve the proposal for public hearing, however to lengthen the school day effective September '04 and to shorten the implementation phase from four years to three years – if not in all districts, in at least those low performing districts – Providence and Central Falls. He also asked that the Board consider having professional development plans reviewed, not only by the Commissioner, but by the public as well.

Rhode Island Federation of Teachers' Field Representative, James Parisi – Spoke regarding agenda item #4 – proposal to lengthen the school day. Mr. Parisi told Board members that he has significant issues with the proposal, but will come forward with them at the public hearings. He also addressed members on agenda item #5 - Appeals to the Board of Regents. Mr. Parisi voiced his concern that the proposal to have appeals heard four times a year will actually exacerbate the problem (to alleviate the backlog), rather than solve the problem. Additionally, Mr. Parisi told members that the proposed changes are procedural changes and as such

should come under the Administrative Procedures Act, which would require public hearings.

Providence School Librarian, Sara Morinon – Addressed the Board on the Providence School Library waiver. Ms. Morinon spoke specifically about staffing issues in public school libraries and outlined what a school library can do with the right support. Looking to the Board and Commissioner for leadership to provide a vision for school libraries in Providence, she urged members of the Board to work with Providence to improve Providence School libraries.

Barbara Ashby, Providence School Librarian – Told members of the Board that under the BEP, it is clear that it is within the powers and duties of the Board of Regents to set standards for school libraries and school library services. She said that when Providence eliminated three librarian positions from Providence high school libraries, the action was a direct violation of the BEP. She urged members of the Board not to approve the variance request because to do so would lead other districts in the state to follow suit to save money.

#### Chairman's Remarks

Because the Chairman was unable to attend the meeting, there were no Chairman's remarks.

#### Approval of Minutes

**MOVED AND SECONDED: That, The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Minutes of the November 13, 2003 meeting as presented.**

**VOTE: Approved Unanimously**

#### Approval of Changes to Regents Regulations Regarding Length of School Day and Additional "Teacher Professional Time" for Purpose of Public Hearing

Regent Guida briefly described the deliberations that the Regents' Progressive Support and Intervention Committee had surrounding the proposal to lengthen the school day and add additional professional development time. Mr. Guida explained that the Board has two proposals in front of them – one of which would phase in the changes (without a transition year) and the second, would allow for a transition year. Mr. Guida said that after many discussions, the committee was recommending that the Regents consider for approval the "transition year" proposal. Commissioner McWalters explained that this proposal has come out of the Regents' work over the last few years surrounding the AYP process and

the districts that are currently in intervention – Providence and Central Falls. He also talked about the concept of “instructional time” versus “professional time.” He emphasized that it is critical that the “adults” in the schools have more time to meet and plan around such things as curriculum and program development, profession development; parental outreach, discipline and suspensions. Currently Providence has no “teacher” time at all. This proposal would extend teacher time in the two intervention districts to provide for “teacher time” (if they don’t already have it). Commissioner McWalters explained that by extending the teacher time before and after school, we protect the current instructional time. Then over the next three years, all districts will be required

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to extend the school day to provide for a “clean” five hours of instruction time to address critical academic areas. It is felt that once the core instructional hours are expanded, it will allow enough time to bring in “other” instructional areas such as art and music. And, in light of the newly passed Regents regulations regarding high schools, the extended time will allow for such things as internships and work on the proficiency requirements.

The Commissioner also explained that the reason the department/Regents committee is requesting a 3 – 5 year phase-in of the proposal is because of the budgetary implementations. Three to five years will give the districts an opportunity to negotiate contracts and address budget and program issues.

RIDE’s Chief of Staff, Jennifer Wood, walked the Board through the proposal focusing on the following:

Definitions – School Day as “time spent by students in school from the time of reporting in the morning to the end of the official student school day in the afternoon.” Ms. Wood explained to Board members that there had been a lot of discussion over the past few years about the definition of

the school day – i.e., “instructional day” versus “teacher day.” Because of those discussions, it had become apparent that because of the varied interpretations throughout the state, it would be more beneficial (and understandable) to define the school day as defined above and then to differentiate Teacher Professional Time as, “All time spent during, before and after the student school day and beyond the student school year for specific purposes of professional development, common planning time with colleagues, and program development.”

Ms. Wood also reviewed the proposed length of the school day for students and teachers, and how the additional time would be phased in, and the teacher professional time for districts in multi-year intervention status as well as for all other districts.

The Regents discussion included issues related to how the districts would fund

the additional time and the research on what actually happens in schools when there is an opportunity for more time, i.e., do students actually perform

better? Some Regents expressed their need to think about how to better utilize

the time they already have, rather than just add more time.

Regent Guida urged passage of the proposal for public hearing, while recognizing that quality time is really the issue, however passage of this proposal would be a place to start and through the public hearings the Board will be able to get the public’s comments and ideas.

**MOVED AND SECONDED:** That The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Changes to Regents Regulations Regarding Length of School Day and Additional "Teacher Professional Time "for Purpose of Public Hearing, as Proposed by the Regents Progressive Support and Intervention Committee.

**VOTE:** Approved (5-2) (Regents opposing the proposal, H. Gallo, C. Callahan.)

**Approval of Changes to "Procedural Rule for Appeals From Decisions of the Commissioner"**

Regent Guida explained that because of concerns about the process of appealing the Commissioner's decisions to the Board of Regents, he had re-written the process, as attached.

The proposed changes provide for more specific timelines for appeal briefs, responses, and rebuttals. Mr. Guida told members that the revisions would clean up and streamline the current procedural rules. There was a discussion about the appropriateness of this item being approved without first going out for public hearing. Ms. Wood told members that because the proposal only changed the procedural rules, it is within the Regents' jurisdiction to make the changes without public hearing. The group also discussed the possibility of having the Regents appoint a committee of non-Regents to hear appeals. It was the consensus of the table that Regents should hear these appeals.

**MOVED AND SECONDED:** THAT, The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Changes to the "Procedural Rules for Appeals from Decisions of the Commissioner," as Attached.

**VOTE:** Approved Unanimously

## **Review of Public Hearings on Rhode Island Standards for the Approval of Educator Preparation Programs and Non-traditional Certification Program Guidelines**

RIDE's Director of Teacher Preparation, Certification & Professional Development, Doris Anselmo briefly reviewed the two proposals – Non-traditional Certification Program Guidelines and the Rhode Island Standards for Approval of Educator Preparation Programs. She told the Board that a total of four individuals had provided oral and written testimony and one institution of higher education had submitted written comment.

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Overall, the testimony had been supportive of both proposals, however some issues surrounding non-traditional certification program guidelines cited included:

- there is no pre-requisite for a pre-employment guarantee for individuals who wish to seek non-traditional certification to enter the summer school experience preceding the school year;
- the program does not provide a revenue stream to any institution except for enrollment in the summer program that would be used to offset the faculty salary;
- there is a necessity for a strong mentorship program; the program needs to include special education.

## **FY '04 & '05 Budget Update**

The Commissioner reported that the Department has gone through the formal budget review with the Governor's office. The department was well received about the lack of funding for FTEs to support the department's work with the districts and schools, however in light of a \$2M statewide deficit, the department is looking closely at increasing federal money - but have made clear that federal funds are very directive and administrative dollars are flat, so there is not much capacity.

Other parts of the country have stopped all state dollars from being used to fund any assessments because of the NCLB testing mandates.

Regent Gaines questioned the capacity of the department's certification office to process applications. The Commissioner said that we are making progress, however still have a long way to go.

### **Committee Reports**

RIDE Assistant Commissioner, David Abbott reported out on the earlier meeting of the Regents Administrator and Teacher Quality Committee. He said that the group had talked about the HOSSE plan for highly qualified teachers. All teachers in core academic areas must be "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. All teachers in core academic areas hired in Title I programs or schools after the first day of the 2002-2003 school year must be "highly qualified".



There was an extended discussion about the confusion among teachers and administrators in the state about who, when and how teachers are to become “highly qualified”. The group talked in length about the need for greater clarity and how to meet that need. It was decided that the department would work with NEA and AFT, the Superintendent’s Association, Principal’s Association and School Committee Association to get out a unified message to all groups.

#### **Commissioner’s Report**

There was no Commissioner’s report.

#### **Executive Session**

There was no executive session.

#### **Adjournment**

With unanimous consent the meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.